Unpaid Work

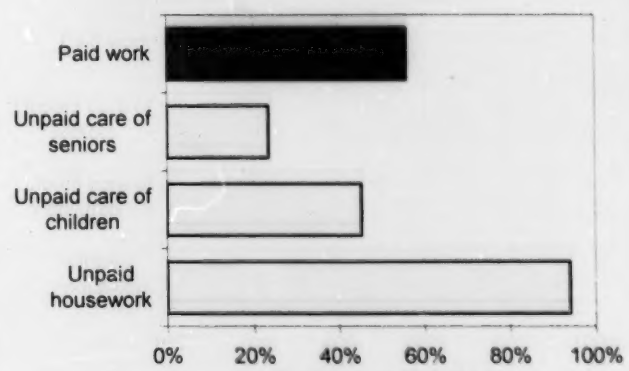
The 1996 Statistics Census was the first to include questions on non-market or unpaid[1] household work. Census respondents aged 15 and over were asked to report the number of hours they spent in the week prior to the Census (May 5th to 11th) doing this kind of work.

Three categories of unpaid work were included:

- "doing unpaid housework, yard work, or home maintenance for members of this household, or others" (e.g. preparing meals, doing laundry, household planning, shopping, cutting the grass);
- "looking after one or more of this person's own children, or the children of others, without pay" (e.g. bathing or playing with young children, driving children to sports activities or helping them with homework, and talking with teens about their problems); and
- "providing unpaid care or assistance to one or more seniors" (e.g. providing personal care to a senior family member, visiting seniors, talking with them on the telephone, and helping them with shopping, banking or with taking medication).

Responses to these questions were made by checking off boxes with ranges of hours rather than reporting the actual number of hours. Respondents could report the same hours in more than one category.

Figure 1: Paid and Unpaid Work, Saskatchewan Women in June 1996



Gender

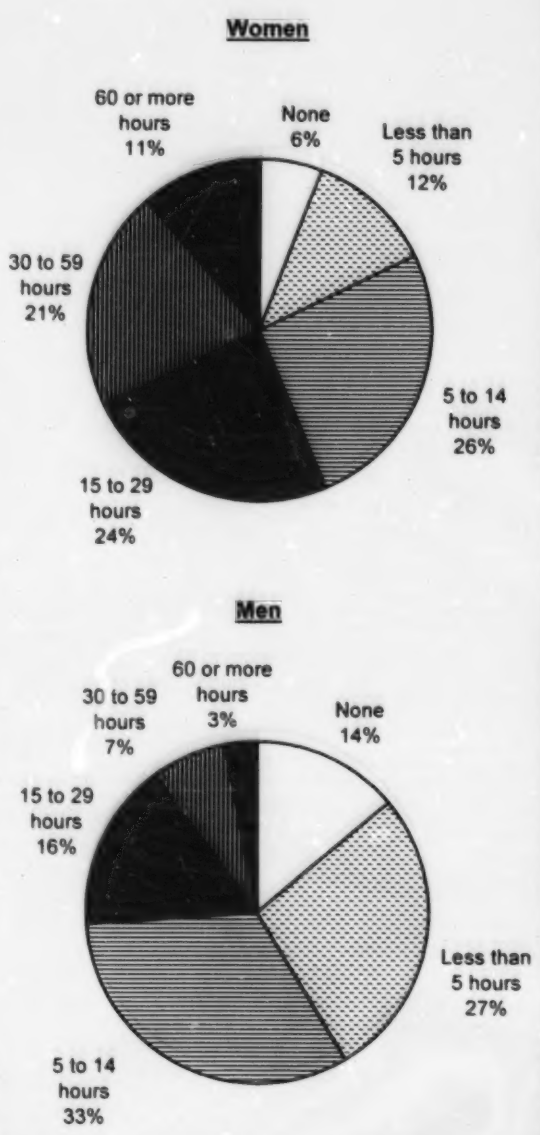
Figures 2 through 4 show the number of reported hours for each of the three categories of unpaid work. Data are presented separately for men and women.

There are significant differences in the hours of unpaid work between men and women.

Women spend more time doing housework - 32% of women spent at least 30 hours per week doing unpaid housework and home maintenance compared with 10% of men. (For comparison, 30 hours of work in the paid labour market is considered a full-time job.)

At the other end of the scale, more men than women do very little housework/home maintenance. Eighteen percent of women spent less than five hours doing unpaid housework and home maintenance compared with 41% of men (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Hours of Unpaid Housework and Home Maintenance, Saskatchewan, 1996


Women
60 or more hours 11%
None 6%
Less than 5 hours 12%
30 to 59 hours 21%
5 to 14 hours 26%
15 to 29 hours 24%
Men
60 or more hours 3%
30 to 59 hours 7%
None 14%
15 to 29 hours 16%
Less than 5 hours 27%
5 to 14 hours 33%

An estimate of the average number of hours per week can be made by assuming that persons worked the midpoint for each range of hours. The estimate for the average weekly hours of unpaid housework is 25 for women and 13 for men.

For unpaid care of children, there are many more respondents reporting no hours, presumably because they have no children in the home (see Figure 3).

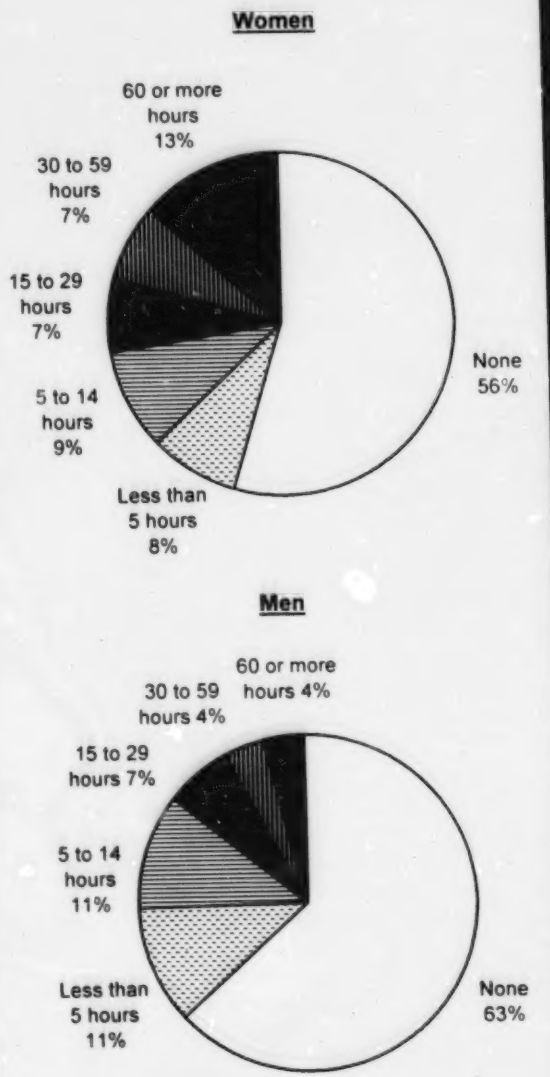
Those spending less than five hours per week may be reporting periodic care of grandchildren, older children, or the care of children in joint custody arrangements.

As with unpaid housework, women dedicate significantly more hours per week than men. On average, 44% of women spend at least some time caring for children and 20% spend 30 hours per week or more.

Just over one-third (37%) of men spend at least some time caring for children while only 8% provide child care for 30 or more hours per week.

The average weekly hours of unpaid child care is estimated at 15 for women and seven for men.

Figure 3: Hours of Unpaid Care of Children, Saskatchewan, 1996


Women
60 or more hours 13%
30 to 59 hours 7%
15 to 29 hours 7%
5 to 14 hours 9%
Less than 5 hours 8%
None 56%
Men
60 or more hours 4%
30 to 59 hours 4%
15 to 29 hours 7%
5 to 14 hours 11%
Less than 5 hours 11%
None 63%

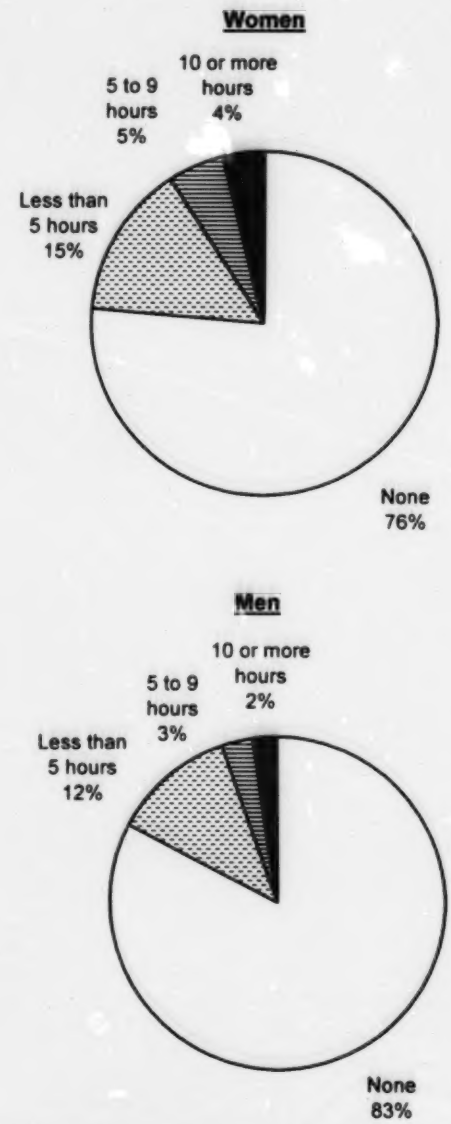
An even larger proportion of Saskatchewan adults spend no time at all in the unpaid care of seniors, at least in the week before the Census (see Figure 4).

Nevertheless, almost one-quarter of women and 17% of men spent at least some hours in the unpaid care of seniors.[2]

The average hours per week are estimated at 1.2 for women and 1.1 for men.

Most observers feel that the 2001 Census will show an increase in the extent of unpaid care of seniors as the provincial population ages and the proportion of seniors living in their own homes grows.

Figure 4: Hours of Unpaid Care of Seniors, Saskatchewan, 1996

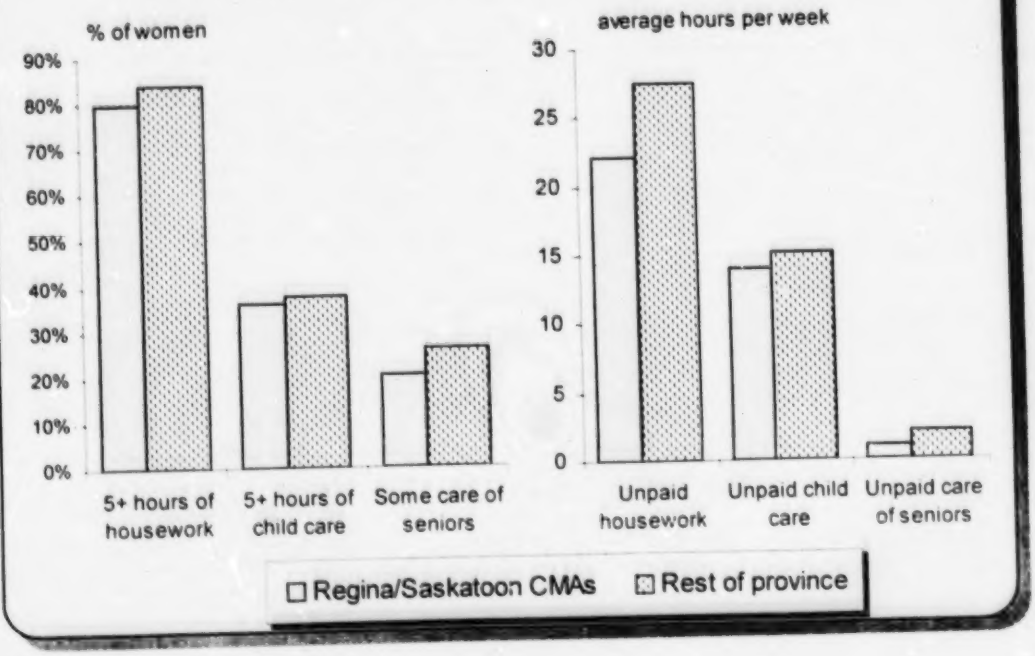


Region

The 1996 Census asked respondents to report on their unpaid activities in early May. The differences between unpaid work in urban and rural centres may be related to the fact that this is a particularly busy time for Saskatchewan farm families and others engaged in gardening or other outdoor household activities.[3] In spite of this, women outside the province's two largest cities are more likely than their urban counterparts to spend time in unpaid work and more likely to average more hours per week.

Figure 5 shows that women outside the Regina and Saskatoon Census Metropolitan Areas[4] (CMAs) were somewhat more likely to spend time in each of the unpaid work categories. The average hours, particularly for unpaid housework, are significantly higher, averaging 27.4 for women outside Regina/Saskatoon compared with 22.1 for women in Regina/Saskatoon[5].

Figure 5: Unpaid Work among Saskatchewan Women, by Region



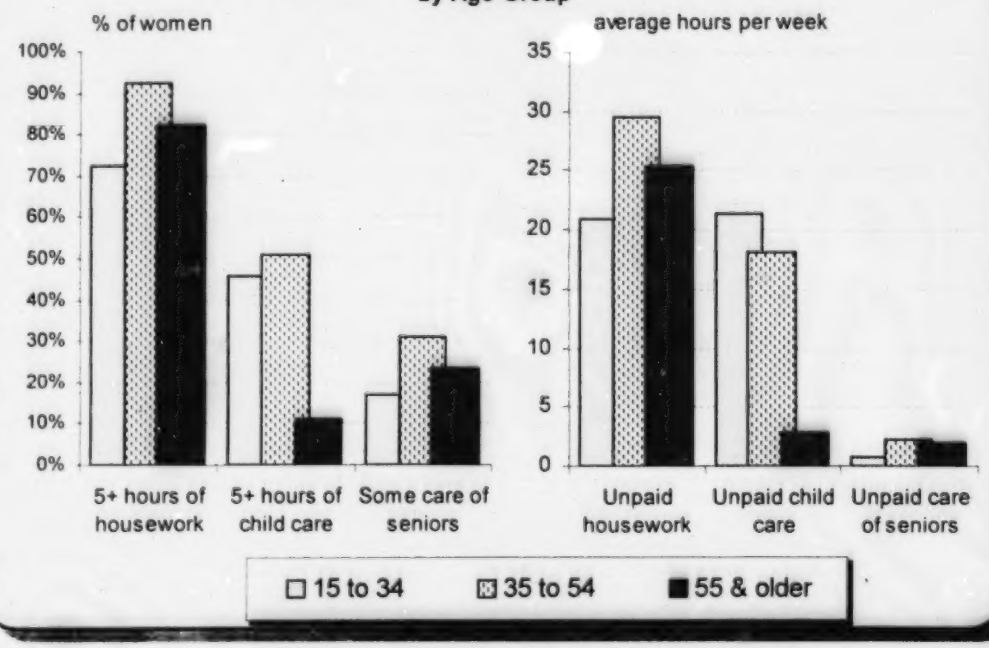
Age Group

The degree of unpaid work varies by age, but not in a uniform way. Those in the middle age group (35 to 54) are more likely to spend unpaid hours doing housework and caring for seniors and also more likely to provide at least five hours of unpaid child care.

Younger women (under 35) tend to spend fewer hours doing unpaid housework but more in the unpaid care of children. This may be a consequence of the fact that any children in the household will tend to be young and that many younger women may not have children.

Seniors are, of course, unlikely to spend a significant number of unpaid hours caring for children. They do, however, spend more hours than young women on housework and unpaid care of other seniors.

Figure 6: Unpaid Work among Saskatchewan Women, by Age Group



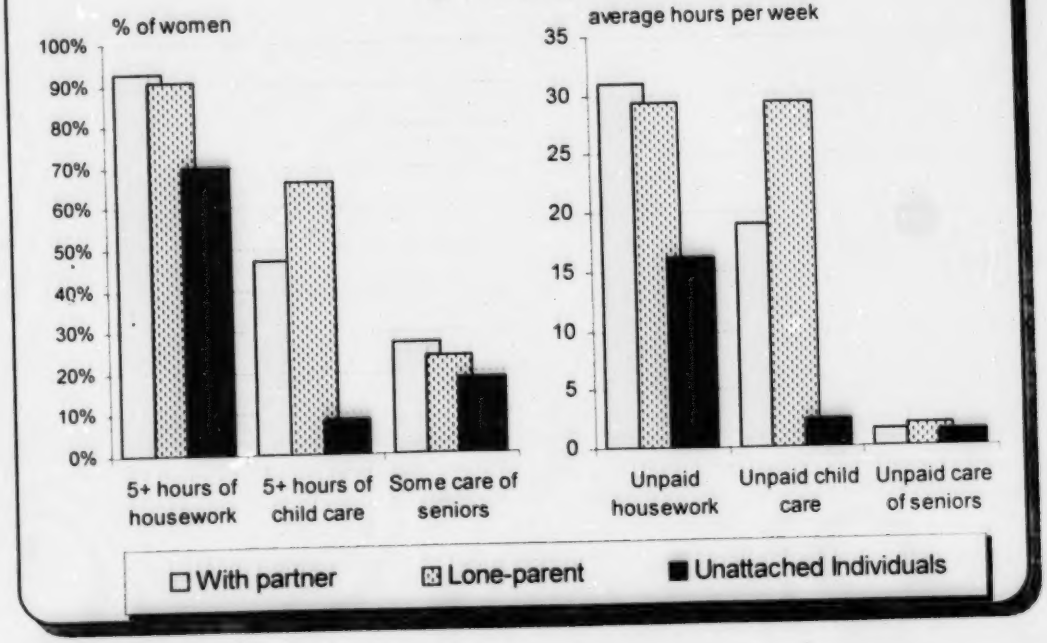
Family Type

Family type will clearly have an impact on unpaid work activity[6]. Lone-parent women, for example, will often be solely responsible for housework and care of children. It is reasonable to expect that those living alone will spend little time caring for children in the household.

Figure 7 shows that lone-parent women are the most likely to spend long unpaid hours[7]. On average a lone-parent woman will spend nearly 30 hours per week on housework and 30 hours per week providing child care. Women with married or common-law partners will spend an equal amount of time on housework (31 hours per week) but less time (18 hours per week) providing child care.

The women who are the least likely to spend any significant time in unpaid housework are unattached individuals. These are typically younger women living alone or with people who are not relatives, or seniors living alone. On average these women spend 16 hours per week on unpaid housework and 30% spend less than five hours per week.

Figure 7: Unpaid Work among Saskatchewan Women, by Family Type



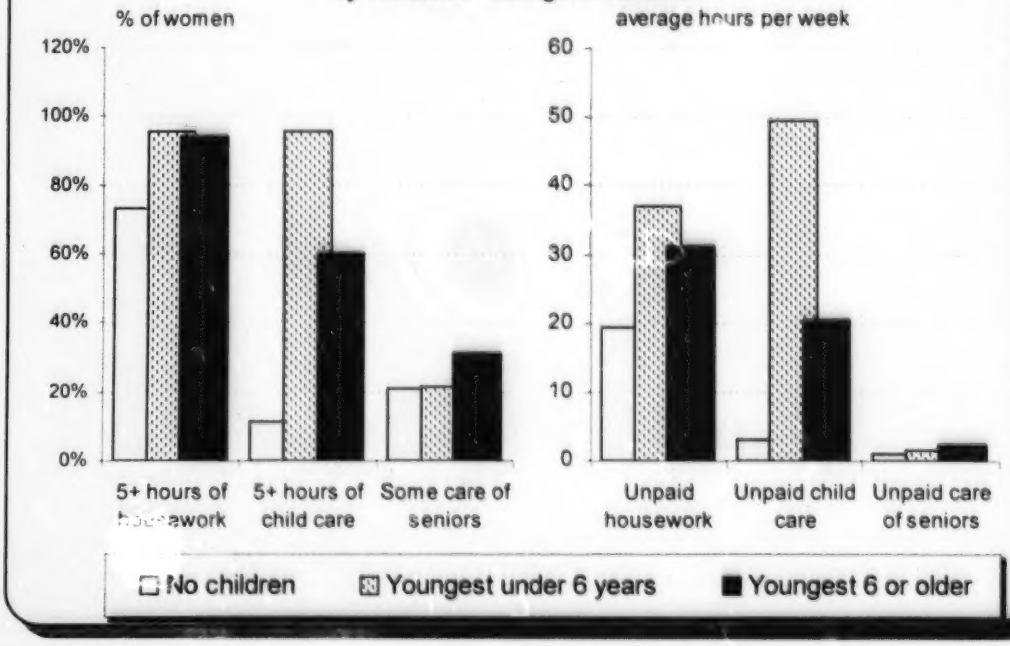
Presence and Age of Children

The presence and age of children will clearly have an impact on the number of hours women spend in unpaid child care but it also affects time spent on housework.

More than one in 10 (11%) women with no children at home still spend at least five hours per week providing unpaid child care. The average unpaid hours spent providing child care among these women is, however, very low. They also spend fewer unpaid hours doing housework.

Among women with children at home, more than 90% spend at least five hours in unpaid hours of housework. If the youngest child is under six years of age, the average hours providing child care increases to nearly 50 hours per week and the average hours of housework is 37. Total unpaid work for these women, including care for seniors, averages 88 hours per week. Women with older children are the most likely to be spending unpaid hours providing care to a senior.

Figure 8: Unpaid Work among Saskatchewan Women, by Presence and Age of Children



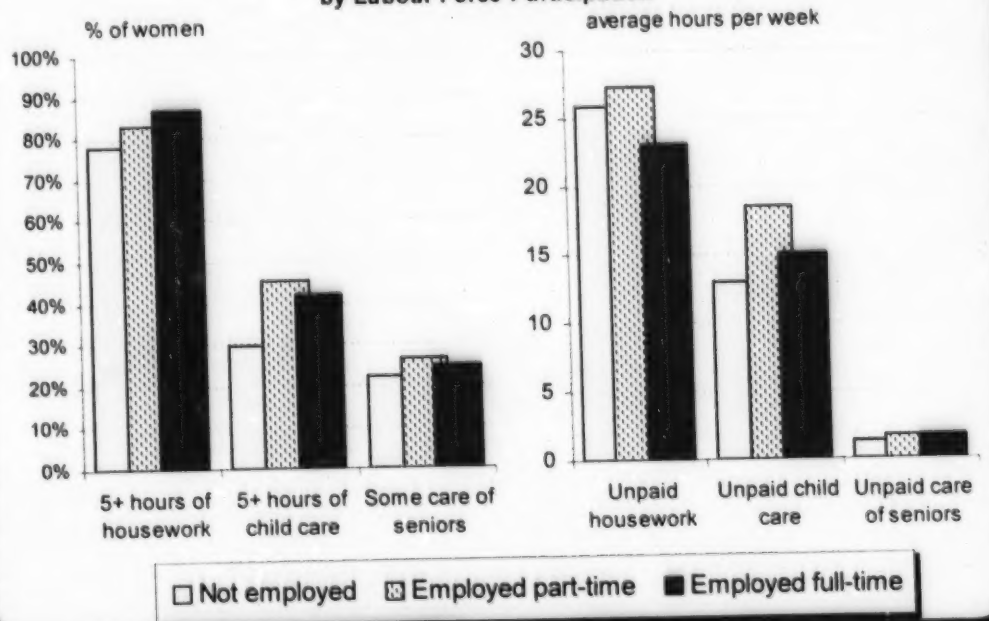
Labour Force Participation

There are some surprising observations when unpaid work activity is compared with labour force participation.

Women who are working in the paid labour force are more likely than women who are not employed to spend time in unpaid work activity.[8] However, the average number of hours spent doing unpaid work declines somewhat if the woman is employed full time. For example, 87% of women employed full-time spend at least five hours per week in unpaid housework, averaging 23 hours per week. They average 15 hours per week of child care and 1.5 hours per week of unpaid care of seniors. If the paid job is 30 to 40 hours per week, the total hours in paid and unpaid work averages 70 to 80 hours per week.

Women who work part-time spend, on average, more hours doing housework and caring for children. Assuming that the part-time job is 20 hours per week, the total market and unpaid work averages approximately 70 hours per week. Among women who were not employed, the total unpaid work averages approximately 40 hours per week.

Figure 9: Unpaid Work among Saskatchewan Women, by Labour Force Participation



Notes

Source: These data are derived from the 1996 Statistics Canada Census. The unpaid work questions were on the "long form" of the Census so it is, in effect, based on a 20% sample of households. Only persons living in private dwellings receive the long form so these statistics exclude those living in so-called "collective" dwellings including, for example, prisons, special care homes, hotels, homes for persons with disabilities, and group homes.

1. *The term unpaid work used in this statistical report should not be confused with the same term used in labour market statistics. Unpaid family work in traditional labour market statistics refers to work for profit in a family business such as a farm without remuneration in the form of a salary. Approximately 5,000 people in Saskatchewan are unpaid family workers in this sense.*

2. *Other studies have shown that while a significant proportion of adults consider themselves responsible for seniors, a large number of seniors do not live nearby, thereby limiting direct hours of care.*

3. *A survey of employees of medium and large Saskatchewan-based organizations found greater time was spent on household chores by rural employees. (Work-Life Balance in Saskatchewan: Realities and Challenges, Dr. Linda Duxbury, Dr. Christopher Higgins.)*

4. *The Census Metropolitan Areas or CMAs include the "bedroom" communities and rural municipalities surrounding the cities of Regina and Saskatoon.*

5. *Forty percent of Saskatchewan farm women surveyed in 1999-2001 indicated that their average work day including farm, home, off-farm, and volunteer work was over 13 hours. Unpaid work typically included garden/yard work and bookkeeping work for the farm. (Women's Diverse Roles in the Farm Economy and the Consequences for their Health, Well-being, and Quality of Life, Wendee Kubik and Robert Moore.)*

6. *The family type breakdown uses the "census family" as the indicator. A census family is defined as "a now-married couple (with or without never-married sons and/or daughters of either or both spouses), a couple living common-law (with or without never-married sons and/or daughters of either or both partners) or a lone-parent of any marital status, with at least one never-married son or daughter living in the same dwelling."*

7. *Women who are daughters in a lone-parent or husband-wife household are not included in any of the categories in Figure 6.*

8. *Three categories of women are included in the "did not work" category in Figure 9 – those out of the labour force entirely, those who were unemployed, and those with a job who did no work during the reference week.*